

Reconciliation

Objective:

Not been to confession in a while? Let's get re-introduced!

Celebrating and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation can be among the most blessed of human experiences. Yet, there are a number of reasons why we don't take advantage of this Sacrament or we don't celebrate it well. Fear, shame, bad experiences of the past, a long time since the last reception of the Sacrament or bad habits are all possible reasons for struggles with this Sacrament. The solution is so simple. A simple understanding of the Sacrament and a small encouragement to give it a new try, with a new expectation, can literally change our lives and will certainly renew our faith.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is God's gift to us. In the story of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tries to tell us that God is simply waiting for us to "come home." In the story, the father is not only waiting, he is out by the road longing for the wayward son to return. And when the son begins to give his practiced speech of repentance, the father interrupts him and shouts orders to begin the celebration. Jesus is telling us that this is how God feels about our reconciliation. It isn't about our having to shame ourselves or face being scolded. It is all about letting ourselves receive the merciful and healing love and peace that only God's love can give us.

Song Suggestion: Hosea (Blue 190, Red 405)

Bible and Catechism Readings:

John 20:21-23

Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.

Matt 6:14-15

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

1 Jn 1:8-9

If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourselves,* and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

Catechism 1422

"Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion."

Catechism 1442

"Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation." The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."

Saint: Padre Pio of Pietrelcina - St. Pio loved the ministry of Divine Mercy. He made himself available to thousands upon thousands through spiritual direction and celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. At times, he could be a tough confessor who made people aware of the seriousness of their sins and the need for repentance.

Vignette:

(Copied from <https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/Returning-to-Reconciliation.html>)

"I suppose my last confession was eight or ten years ago. I sort of got out of the habit. I used to confess the same small sins over and over and I just said, 'What's the use?' I don't commit big sins. I go to Mass every Sunday. I know I'm not perfect. The people I live with and work with would be the first to tell you that. I think I try to do good for my neighbor. I just got away from going to Confession. I just tell the Lord I'm sorry and that's that."

The message our Lord has for this set of circumstances is an encouragement to enjoy the benefits of the Sacrament of Reconciliation more frequently, as a means to grow in our Lord's grace and his peace. More frequent confession will often lead to a better examination of conscience. It may be the case that we won't have any serious sins to confess - even when we consider what we have failed to do. However, examining how we have fallen short in a variety of areas will usually result in our discovering places we need forgiveness and healing. We can ask for God's grace to shine in our hearts and to free us to love more generously and selflessly. The results are often wonderful: we have a personal experience of renewal that begins a new relationship with our Lord and a daily pattern of prayer with him.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Have you had a good reconciliation experience? If so, what made it special?

Have you had a bad reconciliation experience? If so, what happened?

Have you been to confession in the past 12 months? If not, why?

Action Plan:

1. Commit to participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
2. Follow the 7 step guide in the Resources section
3. Do it!

Additional Resources:

<https://catholic-link.org/a-7-step-visual-guide-for-returning-to-confession/>

http://catholicism.about.com/od/beliefsteachings/p/Why_Confession.htm

<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/sacrament-of-penance-examination-of-conscience-9121>

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